

# The Operation of the Mingled Spirit in First Corinthians: Producing and Sustaining the Fellowship of the Body of Christ according to the Demonstration, Teaching, and Pattern of Paul

by John Pester

The mingled spirit is never presented as a formal, theological construct in the New Testament; it is always referenced within the context of the believers' economical experience of the operation of the divine life, which is imparted through the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45). This operation begins in our human spirit, expands into our soul, and ultimately consummates with the glorification of our body. Our initial experience of the operation of the divine life in our mingled spirit occurs when our human spirit is born of the Spirit (John 3:6). In this economical experience the divine Spirit enlivens and regenerates our dormant and deadened human spirit in response to God's righteous justification of us based on our belief and confession (Eph. 2:5; Rom. 10:9-10). Our continuing experience of the operation of the divine life in our mingled spirit occurs as we live and walk in our mingled spirit and grow as children of God. In this economical experience the Spirit witnesses with our spirit (8:16), Christ makes His home in our hearts (Eph. 3:17), and the functions of our mind, emotion, and will increasingly and organically reflect the inward parts of Christ (Phil. 1:8). The operation of the divine life in our human spirit thus expands as we are renewed in the spirit of our mind (Eph. 4:23), as our love in Christ through the Spirit is expressed (1 Cor. 16:24; Col. 1:8), and as the determinations of our will reflect and prove the realities of the divine will (1 Cor. 2:2; Rom. 12:2). The consummate experience of the operation of the divine life in our mingled spirit will occur with the visible manifestation of our sonship, the redemption of our body. In this economical operation the Spirit joins in with our spiritual groanings to help us in our weakness (8:23, 26), and in our mingled groaning, the Spirit intercedes for us to cause all things to work together for good in order to accomplish God's predestined will to conform us to the image of His Son (vv. 27-29).

The operation of the divine life is the focal point of God's once hidden economy. In our age, the New Testament age, this economy, however, has been fittingly revealed to the holy apostles and prophets and also manifested to His saints in the mingled spirit (Eph. 3:5; Col. 1:26). As we experience and grow according to the operation of the divine life in our mingled spirit, the eyes of our heart are enlightened to fully know God, to know the hope of our calling, and to know the riches of the glory of His inheritance in us (Eph. 1:17-18). God's calling will be manifested and God's inheritance will be revealed through the operation of the divine life in our mingled spirit, which has the capacity to present every man full-grown in Christ (Col. 1:28-29). We do not, however, begin this process as full-grown men. Instead, we all begin as "Corinthians."

Like the Corinthians, we are called saints, but we live primarily in our fallen human nature, utterly focused on selfish impulses related to soulish, fleshly, and even spiritual matters, rather than living in the fellowship of His Son, which is the fellowship of the Body of Christ (1 Cor. 1:9). What we are in our human life, the saints in Corinth were. What we need of the divine life, the saints in Corinth were supplied through Paul's

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demonstration of the mingled spirit. What we do not know concerning the divine economy, the saints in Corinth received through Paul's teaching in 1 Corinthians, which is structured according to the operation of the mingled spirit. And what we lack in our living, the saints in Corinth were shown through Paul's pattern of living according to the operation of the mingled spirit.

Paul's first Epistle to the Corinthians reveals the operation of the mingled spirit, which both produces and sustains the fellowship of the Body of Christ. His method of writing demonstrates the operation of the mingled spirit, the content and structure of his teaching correspond to the process of the operation of the mingled spirit, and his writing reveals a living that serves as a pattern of the operation of the mingled spirit. Paul's demonstration, teaching, and pattern related to the mingled spirit ultimately unveil the depths of the mystery of God (2:1), the depths of what God has prepared for us in the fellowship of His Son in the Body of Christ (v. 9; 1:9), the realization of which will match Him in life and nature but not in the Godhead and thus will pass through the consuming fire of His judgment on all that is not according to the operation of the divine life in our mingled spirit.

### **Demonstrating the Operation of the Mingled Spirit**

The utterance that flows forth from Paul's thoughtful consideration and heart of love for the church in Corinth is fluid and organic; it is a real-time demonstration of the operation of the mingled spirit in the writing of the Epistle. Paul wrote in the mingled spirit, and his Epistle bears the mark of a person living in oneness with the crucified and resurrected Christ. The fluidity of his utterance, which flows from one seemingly unconnected point to another and which lacks much of the structural formality of his other Epistles, lulls many commentators<sup>1</sup> into overlooking the significance of the operation of the mingled spirit throughout this Epistle. His utterance, however, reveals the personal and immediate nature of his writing, and it also demonstrates his responsiveness to the personal and immediate operation of the divine life in his mingled spirit.

**T**wo striking passages in 1 Corinthians demonstrate Paul's responsiveness to the organic operation of the mingled spirit—the human spirit which is joined to the Lord as one spirit (6:17). These two passages are 1:13-16 and 7:25-40. In the first passage, while addressing the matter of divisions within the church in Corinth, Paul asks a series of rhetorical questions in order to refocus the believers in Corinth on the reality of their joint participation in the Body of Christ. He begins by asking, "Is Christ divided?" (1:13). The subject of this question is ostensibly Christ Himself, especially since His work is explicitly referenced in Paul's next question, "Was Paul crucified for you?" (v. 13). The proper subject of these two questions, however, is *the* Christ (12:12), the church, which is not divided and which, in fact, is the very antithesis of division in both its creation and reality. Paul is not concerned with presenting a formal teaching about the person and work of Christ; instead, he refers to Christ and His work on the cross in order to remind the Corinthians of their corporate participation in the Body of Christ, which was created on the cross (Eph. 2:14-16). The first two questions in 1 Corinthians 1:13 are rooted in Paul's burden that the Corinthians would participate in the organic reality of the Body of Christ. The third question in this verse, "Or were you baptized into the name of Paul?" is rooted in his desire to focus the Corinthians on experiencing the reality of the Spirit's economical application of the person and work of Christ through their baptism in one Spirit into one Body (12:13).

In the abnormal situation in Corinth, the saints were hindered from entering into the reality of the fellowship of the Body, in part because of their immature understanding of the Spirit's application of Christ's person and work on the cross through baptism. The reality of baptism was lost in their outward practice, and the reality of the oneness that issued from their baptism had been corrupted by their preferences for those who


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had physically baptized them. For Paul, there was only one name into which the believers could be baptized, even if there were many different baptizers; however, for the Corinthians, the person baptizing and the name into which they were being baptized were inextricably but improperly linked. Under the leading of the mingled spirit, Paul affirms the reality of baptism, asking, “Were you baptized into the name of Paul?” (1:13), and the force of Paul’s third question stresses the fact that the reality of baptism can be realized only in the Lord’s name.

In his answer to the third question, Paul attempts to neutralize the influence of baptismal practices as a basis for justifying divisions, saying, “I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, that no one may say that you were baptized into my name” (vv. 14-15). The force of Paul’s answer stresses the fact that the name of a baptizer should not be confused with the name into which a believer is baptized. In order to further distance himself from the divisiveness that was being justified, in part, through the Corinthians’ misappropriation of his name, Paul then remarks that he had baptized only Crispus and Gaius. He rhetorically engages the Corinthians’ misunderstanding of baptism by ironically pointing to the fact that there was no basis for a division in his name because of his limited baptismal efforts in regard to them. If, as the Corinthians believed, a division could be justified on the basis of baptism, then only Crispus and Gaius would have the standing to declare, “I am of Paul” (v. 12). Everyone else who was aligned under Paul’s name would then have to admit that their preference was based on something other than baptism. No doubt, Paul hoped that this realization would refocus the distracted Corinthians back to the one name and one reality of baptism: the believers’ incorporation into the name, the person, of Christ and the Spirit through washing, sanctification, and justification (6:11).

It was an effective argument. However, in the certainty of his recollection about Crispus and Gaius, Paul had overlooked his role in baptizing the household of Stephanas (1:16). This unintentional but inaccurate claim of association with only Crispus and Gaius left his argument open to public challenge by the thoughtful Corinthians. As soon as he had completed the sentence about Crispus and Gaius, perhaps even as he was writing it, he was inwardly reminded about his role in baptizing the household of Stephanas. His response to this inner prompting in his mingled spirit was immediate. Rather than revising and rewriting the previous sentence, permanently removing his oversight from the divine record in Scripture, he instantly acknowledged the leading in his spirit and wrote of his participation in the baptism of the household of Stephanas: “And I did baptize the household of Stephanas also; beyond that I do not know if I baptized any other” (v. 16). *Beyond that* and *I do not know* indicate that Paul’s certainty in verse 14 was tempered by the operation of the mingled spirit, and that this operation was immediately reflected in his tempered writing. What a divine demonstration! What a mercy that such a demonstration remains a part of the Holy Scriptures!

**I**n the second passage, verses 25 through 40 of chapter 7, Paul addressed the matter of virginity and remarriage. He began by acknowledging that he had “no commandment of the Lord” (v. 25), but he gave his opinion. Paul “dared to do this because he had been shown mercy by the Lord to be faithful to the Lord’s interests, and he was truly one with the Lord. His opinion expressed the Lord’s desire” (Recovery Version, v. 25, note 1). At the end of this passage, although Paul again acknowledged that his words were but his opinion, once again there was an inner prompting in his mingled spirit that caused him to temper his statement. In this instance he was prompted to not overly depreciate his fellowship in the eyes of the Corinthians, so he added, “But I think that I also have the Spirit of God” (v. 40). All of Paul’s writing from verse 25 through verse 40 came out of his mingled spirit, including his initial statement that he had no commandment of the Lord, his subsequent opinion in regard to virgins and remarriage, his concluding acknowledgment that he was still offering only his opinion, and his added qualification that his opinion may, in fact, be according to the Spirit of God.



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While Paul briefly alludes to the tripartite nature of man in his early ministry to the Thessalonians, the content of 1 Corinthians unfolds according to the pattern of the economic operation of the mingled spirit on the distinct parts of the believers' tripartite being.

What he said, though it was not spoken by the Lord, still became part of the divine revelation in the New Testament (v. 12). He was one with the Lord to such a degree that even when he gave his own opinion, not the commandment of the Lord (v. 25), he thought that he also had the Spirit of God. He did not claim definitely to have the Spirit of God, but he *thought* that he *also* had the Spirit of God. This is the highest spirituality; it is based on the principle of incarnation.<sup>2</sup> (Recovery Version, v. 40, note 2)

Paul's words in these two passages offered to the Corinthians a unique insight into the operation of the mingled spirit. Paul's speaking was the speaking of the Spirit, and the source of his speaking was deeper than the memories in his mind, the sense of certainty in his emotion, and the tendency for self-effacement in his will. His speaking issued forth from his mingled spirit, passed through the faculties of his soul, and was expressed in the physical act of writing. Every part of his being was involved in demonstrating the operation of the mingled spirit, and the eternal presence of these words in the Word of God highlights these unique demonstrations of the operation of the mingled spirit.<sup>3</sup>

### Teaching according to the Operation of the Mingled Spirit

Although Paul demonstrated the operation of the mingled spirit in the writing of 1 Corinthians, his writing was not so immediate that it lacked a specific framework. Indeed, this Epistle is structured according to Paul's understanding, experience, and teaching concerning the operation of the mingled spirit on the tripartite being of the called saints in Corinth (1:2). In his translation of verse 2 Kenneth S. Wuest expands the phrase *those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, the called saints* to "those who have been set apart for the worship and service of God, this act of setting apart having been accomplished by being placed in Christ Jesus and thus being in vital union with Him" (383). The means of our vital union with Christ is the mingled spirit, and our experience of being placed in Christ Jesus involves the progressive operation of the mingled spirit on the three parts of our humanity—our human spirit, our soul, and our body, which have been affected by the fall and are in need of the operation of the divine life for a blameless and holy living.

Paul addressed many problems that were indicative of a great need for the operation of the divine life, but he did not address them all, because he spoke of setting "the rest...in order" when he would come at a later time (11:34). The problems that he chose to address, therefore, indicate an intent to teach, and 1 Corinthians is specifically structured according to the operation of the mingled spirit on the tripartite nature of man. While Paul briefly alludes to the tripartite nature of man in his early ministry to the Thessalonians, the content of 1 Corinthians unfolds according to the pattern of the economic operation of the mingled spirit on the distinct parts of the believers' tripartite being, beginning with the human spirit in chapters 1 through 4, continuing with the soul in chapters 5 through 14, and concluding with the body in chapters 15 and 16. Every part of the Corinthians' tripartite being had been affected by their deviation from the operation of the life-giving Spirit in their mingled spirit. In response to this fact, Paul fully developed the truth of the tripartite nature of man in 1 Corinthians, showing how Christ, as the life-giving Spirit, is economically active in the believers as righteousness in our spirit, sanctification in our soul, and redemption in our body (1:30).

### The Tripartite Nature of Man

When Paul visited the church in Corinth during his second ministry journey (approximately A.D. 54), prior to the outbreak of the problems he later addressed in his Epistles to the Corinthians, he wrote to the church in Thessalonica. In the concluding words of what many consider to be his first Epistle, he briefly referred to the foundation of a holy living for the church life—the sanctifying work of the God of peace on the entirety of the believers' tripartite being, which is composed of spirit and soul and body (5:23).<sup>4</sup> In

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many ways 1 Corinthians is the full development of the thought contained in 1 Thessalonians 5:23. First Corinthians shows how the God of peace, who imparts the peace of God (1:3), is able to wholly sanctify the members of the Body of Christ through the operation of the mingled spirit on the spirit and soul and body (v. 2). It also shows that the result of this operation is the building up of the church, the Body of Christ. This building is composed of the divine nature of the Father as gold, the redemption of Christ as silver, and the transforming work of the Spirit as precious stones, which are the basis for our blameless preservation and reward at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ (3:12-14).

**E**ven though Paul stressed the tripartite nature of man in both 1 Thessalonians and 1 Corinthians, this truth is not universally acknowledged, and it is often denied in favor of a dualistic concept of humanity, in which humanity is viewed as having only two parts—body and soul—instead of three parts—spirit and soul and body. This concept is prevalent in both Catholic and Protestant theology. According to this view, biblical references to the word *spirit* do not indicate a distinction from the soul in the anthropological constitution of humanity but rather to a distinction in the functions of the soul. In effect, theologians suggest that the word *soul* is utilized in the Scriptures when the actions of the soul are directed toward earthly and material matters but that the word *spirit* is utilized when the actions of this same soul are directed toward heavenly and spiritual matters. François Amiot, a Catholic theologian, illustrates this understanding when he speaks of “man’s own spirit, that is the higher part of the soul, informed and vivified by the Holy Spirit” (155). His immediate qualification of *man’s own spirit* with *the higher part of the soul* reflects the established teaching of the Catholic Church as contained in its Catechism:


The profession of faith of the Fourth Lateran Council (1215) affirms that God “from the beginning of time made at once (*simul*) out of nothing both orders of creatures, the spiritual and the corporeal, that is, the angelic and the earthly, and then (*deinde*) the human creature, who as it were shares in both orders, being composed of spirit and body. (§327)

According to this view there are two realms, spiritual and corporeal, each corresponding to the spirit and the body of man. In §327 *spirit* and *soul* are interchangeable, a point which can be clearly seen in the conflation of the terms *spirit* and *soul* in §365: “It is because of its spiritual soul that the body made of matter becomes a living, human body.” This dichotomous view of humanity, however, is in direct conflict with Paul’s clear reference to spirit and soul and body in 1 Thessalonians 5:23 and with his unambiguous insertion of the word *and* between the words *spirit*, *soul*, and *body*. Because of Paul’s clear utterance, both Catholic and Protestant traditions have been forced to deal directly with the obstacle that verse 23 poses to their teaching of dichotomy. The Catholic Church addresses it in its Catechism, noting,

Sometimes the soul is distinguished from the spirit: St. Paul for instance prays that God may sanctify his people “wholly,” with “spirit and soul and body” kept sound and blameless at the Lord’s coming. The Church teaches that this distinction does not introduce a duality into the soul. “Spirit” signifies that from creation man is ordered to a supernatural end and that his soul can gratuitously be raised beyond all it deserves to communion with God. (§367)

By arguing that verse 23 does not “introduce a duality into the *soul*” (emphasis mine), the Pauline distinction between spirit and soul is semantically obscured and then glossed over with mellifluous words concerning our soul being raised beyond all that we deserve into communion with God. §367 does not directly address Paul’s utterance in verse 23; instead, it semantically undercuts his distinction between spirit and soul, and then rhetorically obfuscates the uniqueness of Paul’s utterance.<sup>5</sup>

In *The Pauline View of Man in Relation to Its Judaic and Hellenistic Background*,



**First Corinthians shows how the God of peace is able to wholly sanctify the members of the Body of Christ through the operation of the mingled spirit on the spirit and soul and body. The result of this operation is the building up of the church, the Body of Christ.**

Much of the difficulty in seeing the tripartite nature of man relates to the fact that the spirit of man was deadened at the time of the fall. Thus, it was incapable of assisting man in arriving at a full understanding of God's creation of humanity as a tripartite being.

W. David Stacey, a Protestant theologian, spends a considerable amount of time presenting arguments for a dualist view of man, but ultimately, he too is forced to confront Paul's words in 1 Thessalonians 5:23. He begins,

There remains one reference which we have not yet discussed, 1 Thess. 5. 23. Here ψυχή [soul] is used together with πνεῦμα [spirit] and σῶμα [body], and it has been argued that this implies a threefold division in Pauline anthropology. Spirit, soul and body are to be preserved to the Parousia. The words ὁλοτελεῖς [wholly] and ὀλόκληρον [complete] point to the real meaning. Paul is emphasizing the entirety of the preservation. The whole man is preserved, and spirit, soul and body simply underline the inclusiveness of the conception. Man in every aspect, man in his wholeness, is to be preserved. (123)

Incredibly, Stacey never directly addresses Paul's distinctive use of terms for each part of our humanity. Instead, he focuses on the words *wholly* and *complete*, which enables him to divert attention from the matter altogether. If Stacey's understanding is correct, then Paul should have, or at least could have, made his point about being preserved wholly without any reference to the constituent parts of our humanity. Stacey even attempts to lessen the impact of this verse by noting that "1 Thess. is the earliest of Paul's letters. His more mature view of the resurrection was formulated after it was written" (123-124). Stacey speaks of the resurrection because he sees 1 Thessalonians 5:23 only in the context of the eschatological operation of the Spirit on the soul and body of man, a matter which Paul takes up in detail in the great chapter on resurrection in 1 Corinthians. Attributing immaturity to Paul's understanding of the tripartite nature of man in 1 Thessalonians 5:23 is dangerous, however, because it implies that the standard of divine truth is changeable according to one's own developing interpretations (2 Pet. 1:20). In effect, he suggests that 1 Thessalonians 5:23 should be discounted completely because Paul came to a more mature realization later in his ministry. But if we are to discount this one verse on the ground that Paul later arrived at a more mature understanding, should we not discount the entire Epistle, assuming that a similar level of immaturity was operative in the writing of the entire Epistle? These evasions by Stacey are not indicative of profound insight but rather of a lack of spiritual sight altogether.

Much of the difficulty in seeing the tripartite nature of man in both the Scriptures and in our experience relates to the fact that the spirit of man, which alone knows the things of man (1 Cor. 2:11), was deadened at the time of the fall (Eph. 2:1). God's economical desire to impart His life and nature into humanity was hidden from our view (3:9; Col. 1:26), and the very organ which was designed to receive His life and nature was inoperative and incapable of assisting man in arriving at a full understanding of God's creation of humanity as a tripartite being. Thus, in the Old Testament age, a period of time in which the human spirit was dead in offenses and sins, the majority of God's speaking dealt with the remaining operative organs of humanity—the soul and the body. Only in the New Testament age, with the enlivening and regenerating of the human spirit being made possible through the death of Christ as the last Adam and the resurrection of Christ as the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45), could the eyes of our heart be enlightened to see the deeper things of God (Eph. 1:18; 1 Cor. 2:10). With a spirit of wisdom and revelation (Eph. 1:17), the things of man immediately became clearer and more comprehensible, especially to the holy apostles and prophets who began to live according to their enlivened and mingled spirit (3:5). Thus, in the New Testament there is an increased emphasis on the spirit, especially in the writings of Paul. Stacey points out this fact but fails to grasp either the economical or anthropological implications of it.

In the Old Testament, נֶפֶשׁ [soul] is used 756 times and רוּחַ [spirit], 378. This figure includes passages where רוּחַ [spirit] is used for the wind and the Spirit of God, as well as for spirits that dwell in man. נֶפֶשׁ [soul] is, therefore, twice as common as רוּחַ [spirit]. In St. Paul ψυχή [soul] occurs only 13 times, and πνεῦμα [spirit], 146 times, so the proportion has changed from 2 to 1 to 1 to 10. (121)

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In his latter Epistles, Paul did not abandon the truth of man's tripartite nature for a more "mature" understanding; rather, he emphasized it through repeated references to *spirit*. What he mentioned in brief in his earliest Epistle to the Thessalonians, he expanded in his later teaching, especially in 1 Corinthians because their situation confirmed a great need for the operation of the divine life on the three parts of their humanity. Paul, thus, broadened the church's understanding of the centrality of this revelation by structuring 1 Corinthians according to his teaching concerning the tripartite nature of humanity.


### *The Tripartite Nature of Humanity in 1 Corinthians*

There are many references to the three parts of humanity in 1 Corinthians. For example, there are direct references to the human spirit (2:11; 5:4-5; 7:34; 14:2, 14-16; 16:18). There are references to the soul through mentioning the functions of the mind, emotion, and will, including thinking (4:9; 7:40), knowing (1:21; 2:12; 13:9, 12; 14:37), loving (2:9; 13:4; 16:24), despising (11:22; 16:11), being jealous (3:3), and determining, willing, and choosing (2:2; 4:19; 9:17; 14:19). And there are references to the physical body (5:3; 6:13, 19-20; 9:27; 15:35). These references are by no means exhaustive, and by themselves they are also not necessarily dispositive of the truth of the tripartite nature of humanity: A committed dichotomist could simply assume that references to *spirit* are indicative of the soul functioning in its higher capacity, whereas references to the soul are indicative of the soul functioning in its lower capacity.

A proof that humans are intrinsically tripartite in their humanity cannot be derived solely from the fact that these various parts are mentioned in the Bible. The real proof rests upon the fact that there is a threefold operation of the Triune God in Christ as the Spirit which corresponds to the three parts of our humanity. This threefold operation is fully revealed in 1 Corinthians. In His economy God has prepared things which eye has not seen, ear has not heard, and which have not come up in man's heart (2:9). What He has prepared involves humanity, and it specifically involves His desire to impart Himself into the humanity that He created in His image and according to His likeness in order to be fully and corporately expressed through glorified humanity in and through His Son.

**T**o carry out God's plan, the Son was with the Father by the Spirit in incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection. This incarnated Son, the last Adam, became a life-giving Spirit in resurrection so that the Spirit as the Son with the Father could reach all those who through faith have believed into Christ (1 Cor. 15:45; Gal. 2:16). When the Spirit reaches redeemed humanity, the Spirit is organically, not simply metaphorically, received by redeemed humanity because the life of God, which cannot be separated from the living Spirit of God, is imparted into redeemed humanity. In the first stage of God's threefold operation in humanity, the Spirit is received in our human spirit. The divine life is received in our human spirit through regeneration. Our spirit even becomes life because of righteousness (Rom. 8:10). The divine life, which we have received in our human spirit, then spreads into the second part of our tripartite humanity in the second stage of God's threefold operation; that is, it spreads from our regenerated and mingled human spirit into the faculties of our soul. This is the process of sanctification whereby Christ makes His home in our hearts through faith (Eph. 3:17). Sanctification does not take place merely in our spirit, because in the economy of God, our spirit is already life; it is already fully set apart for God. Our soul, however, is in need of the divine life for our sanctification. Consequently, sanctification occurs in our soul as the divine life spreads from our spirit into the faculties of our mind, emotion, and will.

When the Lord returns, the divine life which has been imparted into our spirit and soul will swallow up all the death in our physical body. At this time the sting of death in our physical body, sin, will be no more (1 Cor. 15:54-56). This is the third stage of God's threefold operation on our tripartite being. With the redemption of our body, the third part of our being will be brought fully into the reality of the divine, corporate sonship



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**The operation of the divine life in our mingled spirit results in every part of our humanity being organically joined to the Lord. This operation is directed from the center to the circumference of our being, and Paul's teaching mirrors the direction of this operation.**

(Rom. 8:19, 23), and with the revelation of the sons of God, God's multifarious wisdom will be made known through the church (Eph. 3:10).

God's wisdom being made known, however, does not mean that there will be a laudatory realization and praise of God's divine attribute of wisdom. Rather, it means that Christ, who has been wrought and blended into every part of the many sons of God, will be fully and corporately expressed through these many sons as His Body, the church. The multifarious wisdom that will be made known is Christ, who is the wisdom of God, and the church, to whom Christ has become wisdom through God's threefold operation involving righteousness in our spirit, sanctification in our soul, and redemption in our body (1 Cor. 1:24, 30). Witness Lee summarizes this matter in a footnote on verse 30.

Christ became wisdom to us from God as three vital things in God's salvation: (1) righteousness (for our past), by which we have been justified by God, that we might be reborn in our spirit to receive the divine life (Rom. 5:18); (2) sanctification (for our present), by which we are being sanctified in our soul, i.e., transformed in our mind, emotion, and will, with His divine life (Rom. 6:19, 22); and (3) redemption (for our future), i.e., the redemption of our body (Rom. 8:23), by which we will be transfigured in our body with His divine life to have His glorious likeness (Phil. 3:21). It is of God that we participate in such a complete and perfect salvation, which makes our entire being—spirit, soul, and body—organically one with Christ and makes Christ everything to us. This is altogether of God, not of ourselves, that we may boast and glory in Him, not in ourselves. (Recovery Version, note 2)

**T**he proof of our tripartite nature is anchored in the plan that God prepared in eternity past to impart Christ into every part of our being, and the proof of our tripartite nature will be validated when God's glory shines forth from Christ and the church as an enlarged, corporate testimony of His wisdom. This eternal manifestation of wisdom begins with our being joined to the Lord as one spirit in our human spirit. This one spirit is the mingled spirit. The mingled spirit would not be possible without the human spirit, and the mingled spirit would not be possible without the life-giving Spirit. The life-giving Spirit is the last Adam, Christ,<sup>6</sup> and the life-giving Spirit is the economical application of Christ as the wisdom of God to every part of our tripartite being.

First Corinthians reveals the tripartite nature of our humanity within the context of God's predestined plan. It also reveals that the operation of the divine life in our mingled spirit fulfills God's plan and results in every part of our humanity being organically joined to the Lord. This operation begins in our spirit, spreads into our soul, and ultimately saturates our body. The operation of the mingled spirit is directed from the center of our being to the circumference of our being, and the structure of Paul's teaching in 1 Corinthians mirrors the direction of this divine operation.

### **The Operation of the Mingled Spirit in the Structure of 1 Corinthians**

Just as the operation of the divine life begins in our human spirit, which has been mingled with the Spirit through regeneration, Paul begins his Epistle by emphasizing the function of the mingled spirit for both our living and service in chapters 1 through 4. And just as the operation of the divine life spreads from our mingled spirit into the functions of our soul, Paul then shows the Corinthians that the operation of the divine life has the capacity to produce persons who know and respond to the things of man according to the mind of Christ and with the love of Christ in chapters 5 through 14. And, finally, just as the operation of the divine life will reach our physical body, Paul lastly speaks of the power of the divine life in our mingled spirit to raise our physical body into the realm of resurrection in chapters 15 and 16.

The majority of Paul's teaching in 1 Corinthians involves the operation of the divine life in the mingled spirit upon the sanctification and transformation of the soul, not simply



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because this part needs the divine life the most but because the reality of the fellowship of the Body of Christ is produced and sustained by hearts that shepherd and care for the flock of God with the love of Christ according to the mind of Christ (9:7; 13:4; 16:24; 2:16). Without the operation of the divine life in our soul, the temple of God will be destroyed because we will stumble the saints by living according to deceived and vain hearts (3:17-18, 20). First Corinthians ultimately reveals the importance of the mingled spirit for the believers' entrance into the reality of the fellowship of the Body.

### *The Operation of the Mingled Spirit in Chapters 1 through 4*

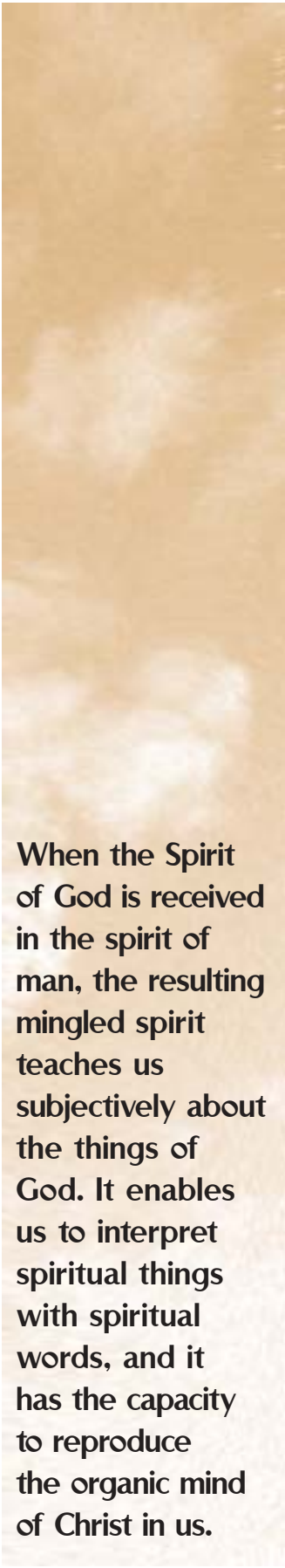
On the surface, chapters 1 through 4 do not seem to be focused on the human spirit but on the soul or at least what is a commonly perceived attribute of the soul—wisdom and knowledge—because the word *wisdom* occurs 17 times in chapters 1 through 3. Paul, however, addressed the vanity of human wisdom in order to refocus the distracted Corinthians on the true source of wisdom, which, in the case of both God and humanity, is the Spirit of God and the human spirit respectively (2:11). Wisdom and revelation are spiritual matters (v. 13; 12:8; Eph. 1:17; Col. 1:9; 2:2-3). The Corinthians were distracted by the wisdom of the world and all of its embellishments (1 Cor. 1:20), including the utterance of human wisdom in eloquent speech and persuasive words (v. 17; 2:1, 4), the current manifestation of wisdom, which is the wisdom of the age (v. 6; 3:19), and the status conferred on those who possess the wisdom of the age, the wise (1:19), all of which, from a spiritual perspective, involve nothing but foolishness (v. 20; 3:19).

**P**aul realized that in order to know the things of God and man in general and the purpose of God for man in particular, there was a need to speak of the reality of the mingled spirit. The believers' entrance into the things of God, even the depths of God, which is realized in the fellowship of the Son, depends on the believers being joined to the Lord in the mingled spirit. Apart from being joined to the Lord, in whom all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden (Col. 2:3), there can be no experience of Christ as the wisdom of God. In a remarkable passage in 1 Corinthians 2, Paul unveiled the reality of the mingled spirit as our experiential entrance into the things that have been graciously given to us by God:

Who among men knows the things of man, except the spirit of man which is in him? In the same way, the things of God also no one has known except the Spirit of God. But we have received not the spirit of the world but the Spirit which is from God, that we may know the things which have been graciously given to us by God; which things also we speak, not in words taught by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual things with spiritual words. But a soulish man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him and he is not able to know them because they are discerned spiritually. But the spiritual man discerns all things, but he himself is discerned by no one. For who has known the mind of the Lord and will instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ. (vv. 11-16)

In this passage there are references to the spirit of man and the Spirit of God; however, these are not references to objective doctrines but to subjective realities. The spirit of man is in us, and we have received the Spirit of God. The purpose of our receiving is to know God. When the Spirit of God is received in the spirit of man, the resulting mingled spirit teaches us subjectively about the things of God. It enables us to interpret spiritual things with spiritual words and to discern the reality of all things, even though we are not discerned; that is, our words, actions, and intentions remain a mystery to the soulish. While the soulish are incapable of knowing the mind of the Lord or of instructing Him, the mingled spirit has the capacity to reproduce the organic mind of Christ in the believers.

Paul identified those who have the mind of Christ as "spiritual men" (3:1). These men function according to the capacity of grace in their mingled spirit, some planting and



**When the Spirit of God is received in the spirit of man, the resulting mingled spirit teaches us subjectively about the things of God. It enables us to interpret spiritual things with spiritual words, and it has the capacity to reproduce the organic mind of Christ in us.**

**All of the Corinthians' problems in the flesh emanated from the puffed up thoughts in their mind and the selfish love in their emotion. When every imagination of the thoughts of the heart is evil continually, humanity is indeed flesh.**

some watering (v. 6), but all working together to labor on God's cultivated land and God's building in order to build up the believers as both individual vessels and a corporate vessel of the indwelling Spirit of God (vv. 8-10, 16). From the mingled spirit as the temple of God, a spiritual service comes forth from the servants of Christ, who are stewards of the mysteries of God (4:1). Faithfulness to a spiritual calling from the mingled spirit produces men who are willing to be spectacles and fools (vv. 2, 9), who both hunger and thirst, and who have no covering and home but who, when reviled, are able to bless and, when persecuted, are able to endure (vv. 11-12). The mingled spirit produces such ministers, and these ministers impart the same teaching in every church (v. 17), not in the way of offering outward guidance but in the way of begetting children by continually imparting life into once deadened spirits (v. 15). When there are a living and service according to the mingled spirit, there is, ultimately, no need for a rod; love and a spirit of meekness are sufficient (v. 21).

**T**he living that Paul speaks of in the first four chapters produces the building of God, which is the mature manifestation of Christ as the wisdom of God, who has been mingled with and wrought into the spirit of the tripartite believers. Without the operation of the divine life in the mingled spirit, the first four chapters reveal that there are only works of the flesh, the manifestations of immature believers selfishly focused on soulish, fleshly, and even spiritual matters, who build with materials other than Christ as the life-giving Spirit in their spirit. In order to build with materials that will pass through the coming test of fire (3:13), Paul proceeds to speak of matters related to the soul in chapters 5 through 14.

#### *The Operation of the Mingled Spirit in Chapters 5 through 14*

On the surface, it seems that chapters 5 through 14 are not focused on the soul but on the body because Paul addressed many matters that are directly related to the body, including fornication in chapters 5 and 6, the physical bond of marriage in chapter 7, the eating of food sacrificed to idols in chapters 8 through 10, and head covering in chapter 11. Paul, however, spoke of these matters in order to expose the influence of the Corinthians' unrenewed thoughts and uncharitable emotions on their fleshly living. All of the Corinthians' problems in the flesh emanated from the puffed up thoughts in their mind and the selfish love in their emotion. When every imagination of the thoughts of the heart is evil continually, the issue, according to God's evaluation, is that humanity is indeed flesh (Gen. 6:5, 3). This was also Paul's evaluation of the Corinthians.

The Corinthians were fleshy and fleshly (1 Cor. 3:1, 3) because they were living according to the fallen impulses of their soul, not according to the operation of the divine life in their mingled spirit. When the mingled spirit, however, is the operational source of our living, our soul can be organically joined to Christ to the extent that our human thoughts express the mind of Christ,<sup>7</sup> and our human emotions convey the love of Christ. When the soul assumes its proper function in the divine economy, the issues are the organic reproduction of the mind of Christ and the love of Christ.

In chapters 5 through 11 Paul speaks of the need for the operation of the divine life in the mingled spirit to extend into the thoughts and emotions of the saints in order to build up the Body of Christ. Paul then stresses this point by showing the Corinthians their position in the Body of Christ, according to the divine perspective in chapter 12, by showing them their obligation to cherish the Body of Christ, according to the divine love in chapter 13, and by showing them their function in the Body of Christ, according to the divine purpose in chapter 14. These three chapters, which speak of the building up of the Body of Christ according to God's divine forethought and love, are in stark contrast to the soulish living of the Corinthians.

Paul begins his examination of the soulish living of the Corinthians in chapter 5 by


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addressing the matter of fornication, but his examination quickly turns from the sinful deed to the mindset which enabled such a sin to occur, asking, “And you are puffed up?” (v. 2). In Paul’s realization, only a mind puffed up in vanity and completely darkened in its understanding could countenance such a sin and not act to remove its leavening influence from the church (vv. 2, 6, 12). “And have you not rather mourned...?” (v. 2) indicates that their unrenewed mind had perverted this shameful matter into an occasion for boasting and self-glory (v. 6). In his mingled spirit (vv. 3-4), however, Paul was clear in his assessment and judgment, and in love he recommended the brother’s removal for the sake of his deliverance (vv. 2, 13).

In chapter 6 Paul speaks of the matter of lawsuits and then returns to the matter of fornication. In response to the specific circumstances surrounding these matters, Paul directs thirteen questions toward the Corinthians (vv. 1-5, 7, 9, 15-16, 19), six of which include the phrase *do you not know* (vv. 2-3, 9, 15-16, 19). The intention behind each question reflects Paul’s desire to prompt the thinking of the Corinthians to blossom anew, and his repeated use of the phrase *do you not know* serves to emphasize not only their need for a renewed mind but also points to the things of Christ that should properly fill their mind. When the saints will judge the world and angels, seeking small judgments from those who are of no account in the church is of little consequence and even shameful (vv. 2-5). When the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God, being led astray to bodily abuses is something unworthy of those who have been washed, sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord and in the Spirit of God (vv. 9-11). When our bodies are members of Christ, living in the sinful realm of the physical abuse of the body rather than the edifying realm of the mingled spirit, damages the temple and dwelling place of God (vv. 15-19). And when our body is, in fact, the temple of the Holy Spirit, glorifying God in our body should be our only consideration (v. 20).

All of Paul’s considerations in chapter 6 are organic assessments from the mind of Christ, and his admonitions in response to these assessments are organic expressions of the love of Christ for the saints. Without the love of Christ, there is no willingness to be wronged, especially to be wronged when there is no warrant, but this was Paul’s heart (v. 7). Without the love of Christ, there is no willingness to be defrauded; instead, there is only a taking account of evil and an uncovering and intolerance of all things. Through the love of Christ and with the love of Christ, Paul urged the Corinthians to not seek their own things related to the items covered in chapter 6 and even in chapter 7.

**I**n chapters 8 through 10 Paul deals with the eating of things sacrificed to idols, by addressing the unrenewed thoughts and uncharitable love of the Corinthians, by presenting a higher view of the Lord’s table, and by encouraging a greater concern for the brothers. Just as in chapter 5, he quickly turns from the act of eating things sacrificed to idols to the underlying source of the Corinthians’ problems, stating, “Knowledge puffs up” (8:1). Throughout chapters 8 through 11, the unrenewed thinking of the saints is a central point in the teaching of Paul, who refers to those who think that they know (v. 2). He also refers to God who truly knows (v. 3), and to himself who also knows (v. 4). He acknowledges that a proper understanding of idols is not in all men (v. 7), who can be destroyed by others’ reckless use of this knowledge (v. 11). In chapter 9 he attempts to prompt a renewed thinking among the Corinthians, so he asks, “Do you not know?” (vv. 13, 24). When those who labor on the sacred things have a right to eat the things of the sacred temple but do not insist on this right in order to cause no hindrance to the gospel, should not also the Corinthians relent in their reckless exhibition of their freedom if others will be stumbled (vv. 12-13; 8:13)? And when not everyone who runs on a racecourse receives the prize, should not also the Corinthians forsake their reckless pursuit of the corruptible things of the flesh in order to gain an incorruptible reward (9:24-25)? In chapter 10 Paul disabuses them of their ignorance, recognizing that they lack a proper understanding of their spiritual participation in the fellowship of the Body of Christ through baptism (vv. 1-2), through eating and drinking



**All of Paul’s considerations are organic assessments from the mind of Christ, and his admonitions are organic expressions of the love of Christ for the saints. Without the love of Christ, there is no willingness to be wronged, but this was Paul’s heart.**

**Both Christ's death as the last Adam and His resurrection as the life-giving Spirit are according to the Scriptures, because only through these economical steps can the divine life be imparted and fully mingled with every part of our tripartite being.**

Christ as their spiritual food and spiritual drink (vv. 3-4), and through partaking of the symbols of Christ in the fellowship of the blood and body of Christ (v. 16). He shows them that there is but one Body, because there is only one bread and because we all partake of this one bread (v. 17). He also implores the Corinthians to seek the profit of others in love rather than their own profit (v. 24), because when the love of Christ in the mingled spirit is operative according to the mind of Christ, others will gain the advantage through salvation and building up (vv. 23, 33; 8:1; 9:22).

In chapter 11 Paul speaks of the matter of head covering and then returns to the matter of eating in the context of the Lord's supper. He speaks of these practices from the standpoint of the mind of Christ in order to adjust the unrenewed thinking of the Corinthians. He begins by stating, "I want you to know" (v. 3). The knowledge that the Corinthians lack is an experiential knowledge of the headship and authority of God in Christ to the church (v. 3). In these matters God's authority is absolute, and consequently there is no ground for contention among the churches concerning the teachings that Paul has handed down (vv. 16, 2). There is also no ground for divisions (v. 18), especially related to the practice of the Lord's supper, which speaks of the new covenant in His blood and which, being conducted in remembrance of Him (v. 25), is not an occasion for ostentatious displays which uncharitably put some to shame (v. 22). With a proper love, the body can be properly discerned, and the members can even properly discern themselves (vv. 29, 31); that is, they will have the ability to "evaluate the significance of the bread that [they] take at the Lord's supper" (Recovery Version, 11:29, note 2). At the end of chapter 11 Paul notes that he will set the rest in order when he comes (v. 34), indicating that the concerns he has addressed have sufficiently highlighted the Corinthians' need for the operation of the mingled spirit on their unrenewed and unsanctified souls.

Chapters 12 through 14, which will be considered in greater detail in a later section of this article, are also structured according to the operation of the mingled spirit on the soul. In many respects, these chapters are the capstone of Paul's teaching concerning the mingled spirit because they reproduce the mind of Christ with the love of Christ for the purpose of producing and sustaining the fellowship of the Body of Christ. As such a capstone, they reveal the pattern of the operation of the mingled spirit in Paul himself.

### *The Operation of the Mingled Spirit in Chapters 15 and 16*

Chapters 15 and 16 complete Paul's structured teaching concerning the operation of the divine life on the third part of our tripartite humanity, the body. In chapter 15 Paul emphasizes the power of the resurrection life on the body, a power which is not limited simply to the coming resurrection. He begins by responding to the false teaching that there is no physical resurrection of the dead (v. 12). His argument, however, is not merely objective, even though he recounts and stresses the objective elements of the truth in the gospel: Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, He was buried, and He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures (vv. 3-4).

Paul adds the qualifier *according to the Scriptures* when he speaks of Christ's death and resurrection in order to underscore the importance of the revelation that he presents later in the chapter, the revelation that Christ became a life-giving Spirit in resurrection, following His death as the last Adam (v. 45). Both Christ's death as the last Adam and His resurrection as the life-giving Spirit are according to the Scriptures, because only through these economical steps can the divine life be imparted and fully mingled with every part of our tripartite being for God's full expression, which is the focus of God's prepared and scripturally revealed plan. Apart from the mingling that is made possible through death and resurrection, we would still be in our sins and the most miserable of men (vv. 17, 19). But thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ: Resurrection life can be imparted into our human spirit, spread into our soul, and ultimately glorify our body! What is sown as a soulish body can

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be raised a spiritual body through the operation of the divine life in the mingled spirit (v. 44). When the mingled spirit fills us unto all the fullness of God in our spirit and soul and body, the image of the heavenly will be borne and fully displayed in glory (v. 49).

The principle of resurrection implies the full development of a sown seed, through the reproduction of the life and nature of the seed (vv. 37-38). Our destiny to experience the economic reality of resurrection, according to this organic principle, explains Paul's reason for speaking of Christ as the life-giving Spirit (v. 45). It is the life-giving Spirit who is sown as a seed of life into our tripartite being, and it is the life and nature of Christ that are being reproduced in us in this age and that will be fully manifested in the twinkling of an eye at the beginning of the coming age (v. 52). The principle of resurrection that Paul describes in verses 35 through 49 does not apply only to the eschatological resurrection of our body; it also applies to our experience of resurrection in this age.


This manifestation of resurrection in this age and in the coming age is implied in Paul's additional word concerning the coming resurrection in verses 50 through 58. When Paul begins by writing *now this I say* in verse 50, he is elaborating on what he has spoken of previously in verses 35 through 49, but he is also making a further distinction. The only distinction between the principle and definition of resurrection in verses 35 through 49 and the description of the ultimate victory of resurrection in verses 50 through 58, is a distinction in time. Resurrection, involving the sowing of a spiritual seed into a soulish body with a view to raising it as a spiritual body, is not simply an event in the future; it is also a process in this age which enlivens our spirit, transforms the faculties of our soul, and makes our physical body a member of Christ (6:15), a temple of the Holy Spirit (v. 19), and a vessel for the display of God's glory (v. 20). We are joined to the Lord as one spirit so that the remaining parts of our tripartite being can participate in all the organic benefits of resurrection in this age.

Chapter 16 concludes the Epistle and Paul's teaching concerning the operation of the mingled spirit on the tripartite nature of redeemed humanity by focusing on caring for the physical needs of the saints. Attending to the needs of the saints includes both the collection of money for the mutual care of the members of the Body and the visitation of the members of the Body to other local expressions of the church for the sake of blending in the Body (vv. 1-2, 5-7, 17-18). Overcoming the power of mammon, which is in direct opposition to God, requires resurrection life. And overcoming the human tendency to be physically isolated by abandoning our assembling together in our locality and with believers in other localities also requires the power of the resurrection life.

Paul's teaching concerning the operation of the divine life in the mingled spirit informs the structure of 1 Corinthians from the first chapter to the last. Six of the fifteen chapters in 1 Corinthians are devoted to the operation of the mingled spirit at the center and the circumference of our tripartite being. The other nine chapters are devoted to the second part of our tripartite being, the soul, because the sanctifying operation of the life-giving Spirit in this age is primarily focused on separating us from every defilement of flesh and spirit in order to perfect holiness in our soul (2 Cor. 7:1). In illustrating the process of sanctification in our soul, Paul devotes six of the nine chapters of 1 Corinthians to the various forms of defilement that were present in the church in Corinth. The remaining three chapters, chapters 12 through 14, present the pattern of a person who lives according to the mind of Christ and love of Christ for the sake of the Body of Christ because Christ has been organically reproduced in his soul. It is the pattern of a true imitator of Christ (11:1).

### Presenting a Pattern of the Operation of the Mingled Spirit

While the divine life operates on the distinct parts of an individual believer, this operation reproduces the fellowship of the Son in the corporate fellowship of the Body of



**It is the life-giving Spirit who is sown as a seed of life into our tripartite being, and it is the life and nature of Christ that are being reproduced in us in this age and that will be fully manifested in the twinkling of an eye at the beginning of the coming age.**

**Paul lived in and according to his mingled spirit. He was a living pattern of how to build up the Body of Christ. Using spiritual words taught through the operation of the mingled spirit, he exemplified the spiritual reality of the Body of Christ in chapters 12 through 14.**

Christ. Given their perverted understandings and misdirected affections, the Corinthians had little experience of the operation of the divine life and thus had little realization of the fellowship of the Body of Christ. Rather than knowing the mingled spirit, they knew only the things of the soul and the flesh (2:14; 3:3). They knew nothing of the spiritual realities of the Body (12:1). Their lifeless love lacked harmony (13:1), and their spiritual exercise of speaking had no impact on the building up of one another in mutuality (14:3-4). They were living examples of how not to build up the church (vv. 10, 12), the Body of Christ.

In contrast to the Corinthians, Paul lived in and according to his mingled spirit. As a spiritual man who discerned all things, especially the Body of Christ, Paul was a living pattern of how to build up the Body of Christ (2:13, 15; 11:29). Using spiritual words taught through the operation of the mingled spirit, he exemplified the spiritual reality of the Body of Christ in chapters 12 through 14. Only Paul could do this.<sup>8</sup> The spiritual words that Paul employed revealed that he was a man living by and constituted according to the operation of the divine life in the mingled spirit. In contrast to the Corinthians, this life had spread into his soul: in chapter 12 his understanding of the Body reflected the mind of Christ, in chapter 13 his cherishing of the Body reflected the love of Christ, and in chapter 14 his encouragement to the members of the Body to speak to one another in mutuality reflected his experience of how to practically build up the Body of Christ.

In chapter 12 Paul's understanding of the Body of Christ was based on the divine reality and thus reflected the divine perspective. His understanding of the Body governed his living in the Body. He realized that the reality of the Body is in the Holy Spirit, who becomes real to us in our experience by calling on the name of the Lord (v. 3). In this Spirit there are distinctions of gifts and different manifestations of the Spirit (vv. 4, 7). This one and the same Spirit operates all things, according to the purpose of God through the distribution of the Spirit into the believers (vv. 6, 8-11), to produce the Christ (v. 12), the corporate enlargement of the Son through the many members. In the corporate Christ the Body is one, because we have been baptized into one Body, and we continue to drink one Spirit (v. 13). In the Body all the members are indispensable. Even if a member is a foot and not a hand, it is still part of the body, and even if a member is an ear and not an eye, it is still part of the body (vv. 15-16). The very existence of many members proves the reality of the body and the necessity of every member (vv. 14, 17-20). In the body the eye needs the hand, and the head needs the feet (v. 21). Even the weakest member should be granted the most abundant honor because when one member suffers, all the members suffer with it, and when one member is glorified, all the members share in the rejoicing (vv. 22-26). When the members see their place in the Body of Christ, the placement of some as apostles, prophets, and teachers, and the distribution of gifts by God are not a source of contention but of building up, especially when the members take the most excellent way of cherishing the Body in the love of Christ (vv. 28-31).

Paul's consideration of the Body comes entirely out of his experiential realization of the mind of Christ. Where in the Old Testament is there precedent for the revelation in this chapter? Where in the Corinthian experience is there even a hint of this reality? Paul was speaking in words taught by the Spirit in his experience of the mingled spirit (2:13). Whereas his words are now the basis for doctrine, when he released them they were simply the speaking of a person whose mind was mingled with the Spirit of God to the extent that he knew God's purpose and understood God's unique actions of blending and placing the members in the Body to accomplish His purpose (12:24, 28). He also understood, however, that even a proper perspective on the Body of Christ, one which gives no ground to division, is not enough; there is still the need for care that comes out of the love of Christ (v. 25).

In chapter 13 Paul's care for the Body of Christ was based on the divine reality and thus reflected the divine love. His love for the Body also governed his living in the Body. He

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recognized the centrality of the knowledge-surpassing love of Christ, which is needed in order for the saints to be filled unto all the fullness of God (Eph. 3:19). Without love, every item of knowledge to him was only sounding brass or a clanging cymbal, which profited nothing (1 Cor. 13:1-3). But with the love of Christ, there is long-suffering and kindness and the absence of jealousy, pride, and vanity for the receiving of the saints (v. 4). There is also no unbecoming behavior or the seeking of its own things, and rather than taking account of evil, there is a rejoicing with the truth and a covering, believing, hoping, and enduring of all things for the honoring of the saints (vv. 5-7). The love of Christ produces a maturity which the Body needs in order to grow up into Christ in all things related to the believers' souls (v. 11). Chapter 13 is a living reflection of Paul's heart for the saints. He applied all the attributes of love that he described in chapter 13 throughout his entire Epistle, but his most striking application is in chapter 14, where he presents a pattern of speaking Christ to one another in mutuality for the building up of the Body.

In chapter 14 Paul presents the pattern of a person who is able to build up the Body of Christ by encouraging the practice of every member prophesying in the meetings of the church, that is, speaking forth Christ from the mingled spirit to one another, one by one (v. 31). When Paul encouraged the saints to prophesy, he was not referring to foretelling future events but rather to telling forth the Lord through a mingled speaking with the Lord.<sup>9</sup> Prophesying is a mingled speaking that builds up the church; it involves ministering Christ to the fellow members of the Body through understandable human words that have grace as their intrinsic content (Eph. 4:29).


Since to prophesy is to speak for the Lord and speak forth the Lord, that is, to minister Christ to people, which is the main element in the church meeting, prophesying requires the divine life to fill it as its content. Love is the excellent way to experience the divine life and make it the content of the gift of prophecy for the building up of the church. (Recovery Version, 1 Cor. 14:1, note 3)

**P**aul's pattern of encouraging every member to participate in the building up of the Body of Christ through the practice of prophesying reflects the mind of the Lord in His appreciation of every member, and Paul's realization that every member can encourage and be encouraged through the living speaking of the members one to another reflects the cherishing love of Christ.

In order to prophesy, the love of Christ must be pursued (v. 1), and since the intended beneficiaries of this love are the members of the Body (v. 3), rather than the self or even God (vv. 2, 4), the members' speaking forth of Christ must be in understandable or interpretable words (vv. 2, 5, 9-11, 13). In order to build up the church through mutual encouragement and consolation, there is the need for clear and certain sounds (vv. 3, 8). For the building up of the church, the prayers, songs, and blessings in the members' mingled spirit must pass through their mind and be uttered with words that even the unlearned can comprehend and affirm with their own Amens (vv. 15-16). Taking the way of prophesying reflects a maturity in knowing the mind of Christ, and taking the way of prophesying reflects a maturity in expressing the love of Christ (v. 20).

In order to prophesy in love, there is a need for a balanced and orderly functioning of the members of the Body (v. 40). When the members come together, all need to recognize that each one has something to offer, whether it is a psalm, a teaching, a tongue, or an interpretation (v. 26). Therefore, all can prophesy one by one, knowing that the exercise of their spirit is subject to their renewed will (vv. 31-32). As the members prophesy one by one, all learn and all are encouraged, and the Body is built up in love.

The operation of the mingled spirit supplies the believers with the mind of Christ and the love of Christ, both of which are practically manifested when the saints speak to one another and one by one in the meetings of the church. Surely this is the excelling way to



**The operation of the mingled spirit supplies the believers with the mind of Christ and the love of Christ, both of which are practically manifested when the saints speak one to another in the meetings of the church. This is the excelling way to build up the church.**

As the mingled spirit spreads into every part of our tripartite humanity, it also blends the members of the Body together and activates the organic function of every member. In this mingling, the fellowship of the Body is sustained.

build up the church (v. 12). Surely the spiritual know the truth of these commanded matters (v. 37). The believers should desire earnestly to prophesy, knowing that this is the way to build up the church, but they also should not forbid less fruitful practices, allowing the love of Christ to cover all things and to empower them to behave becomingly in all things (v. 39).

The practice of prophesying facilitates the organic functioning of the Body of Christ according to the pattern of Paul's understanding of the Body of Christ in chapter 12. The practice of prophesying displays the organic cherishing of the Body of Christ according to the pattern of Paul's enlarged heart in chapter 13. And the practice of prophesying manifests the organic issue of the operation of the mingled spirit, according to the mind and love of Christ, which is the church's incorporation into the Triune God in the fellowship of the Son, which is also the fellowship of the Body of Christ (v. 23). When the church is built up according to the pattern of Paul in chapters 12 through 14, the God who is among the church is the wise God who has been wrought as wisdom into every part of the redeemed and sanctified members of the Body of Christ (v. 25).

### Producing and Sustaining the Fellowship of the Body of Christ through the Operation of the Mingled Spirit

The fellowship of the Body of Christ is the goal of the operation of the mingled spirit, and it depends upon the operation of the mingled spirit. As the mingled spirit progressively spreads into every part of our tripartite humanity, it deals with every negative, divisive, soulish, and fleshly element in our being by mingling the life-giving Spirit with our spirit and soul and body. In this progressive mingling, the fellowship of the Son is enlarged, producing the fellowship of the Body of Christ, which includes not only Christ as the Head but all the members as His Body. And as the mingled spirit progressively spreads into every part of our tripartite humanity, it also blends the members of this Body together and activates the organic function of every member. In this progressive mingling, the fellowship of the Body of Christ is sustained.

Without the mingled spirit, there is no fellowship of the Body of Christ. Without the mingled spirit, there is no application or operation of the divine life within our tripartite being. Without the mingled spirit, the wisdom of God cannot be manifested, and without the mingled spirit, our faith is in vain. The mingled spirit is a foolish thing, and its stewards are fools. Nevertheless, the grace of God which is toward us is not in vain because the mingled spirit is a reality, just as our God and His purposed plan are real. And so Paul exhorted in thoughtfulness and love throughout his Epistle, concluding it with a greeting written from his mingled being with his own hand. **LFC**

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup>David Stanley's observations about 1 Corinthians encapsulate this tendency. He writes, In contrast with many of the Pauline epistles, I Corinthians appears to consist principally of a series of admonitions concerning division and scandals in the community (I,10-6,20), then a group of *responsa* (7,1-14,40), and finally a lengthy apology for the dogma of the resurrection of the just (15,1-58). (108)

The use of the phrase *a series of admonitions* in conjunction with *in contrast* suggests that there is no particular, unifying structure to Paul's writing in 1 Corinthians, because he is focused only on responding to disparate situations in Corinth that have no thematic connection. Consequently, the operation of the mingled spirit in the structure of Paul's writing is easily overlooked because his admonitions, while important for the Corinthians, are not recognized as rising to the same level of importance as his teachings in other Epistles.

<sup>2</sup>The principle of incarnation is the principle of the mingling of divinity and humanity. This principle is seen most clearly in the mingling of divinity and humanity in the person of Jesus



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Christ, and it is duplicated in the mingled spirit, which is the issue of the mingling of the divine Spirit and the human spirit in the enlivened and regenerated human spirit.

Many in Christianity cannot or will not affirm the reality of the mingled spirit. Those who fail to see the biblical revelation of the tripartite nature of man cannot affirm it, and those who are overly sensitive to the term *mingle* will not affirm it, even if they accept a trichotomous view of humanity. This is regrettable. It is important to realize that the same dynamic involved in the mingling of divinity and humanity in the person of Christ through incarnation is involved in the mingling of the divine Spirit and the human spirit through regeneration. I have purposefully used the term *mingling* rather than *union*, which is a more commonly accepted theological term when discussing the two natures of Christ, because I believe that *mingling* is a more precise, biblical descriptor (Lev. 2:4-5). Sensitivity to the term *mingling* in regard to the person of Christ is rooted in the Chalcedon declaration that the two natures in Christ were “inconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably” one. The term *mingling* has been tainted by being commonly associated with the teaching of Eutyches, which was rejected in the utilization of the term *inconfusedly*. According to Eutyches the union of the divine and the human in Christ was so thorough that “Christ’s divinity absorbed His humanity, leaving but one nature, the divine” (Robichaux 31). This is not our understanding of mingling.

When we use the term *mingling* to refer to what Christ is in His incarnation and resurrection, we mean that divinity was brought into humanity and that humanity was brought into divinity. We do not mean that His two natures were dissolved or that He now bears a third nature, neither completely divine nor completely human. (62)

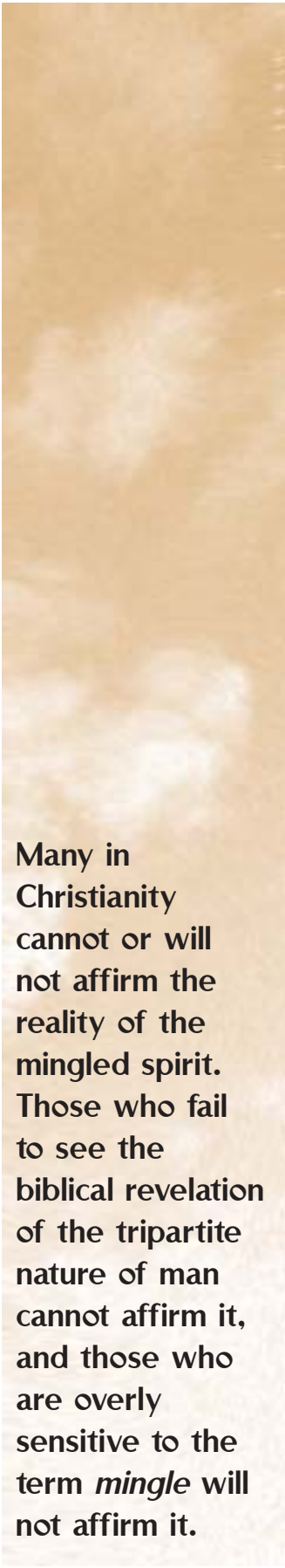
When the subject of the mingled spirit is considered, there is a certain lack of clarity among theologians about how to describe the process by which the human spirit is joined to the Lord. W. David Stacey speaks of the difficulty of describing the regenerated spirit, saying,

The question is whether the entry of God’s Spirit creates *e nihilo* a new spirit in the Christian, which exists side by side with his natural spirit [the natural possession of every God-created human being], or whether the Spirit recreates the natural spirit, so that the Christian possesses only one spirit, different in quality from that of unbelievers. The latter alternative is more simple and more natural, and to be preferred. It is difficult to refer to authorities on this point, for many writers pass over the problem. (134)

As Stacey indicates, few writers are willing to address this matter. When they do, however, there are echoes of the Chalcedonian denunciation related to the confusion of natures in the person of Christ; this is due to a lack of clarity about the one spirit that Paul speaks of in 1 Corinthians 6:17. Stacey also writes, “We are led by the Spirit and helped by the Spirit. There was no blurring of boundaries, no confusion. The spirit of man was energized by the Spirit, but the human spirit never rose to share the divine nature. There is fellowship and communion, but not absorption” (133). François Amiot, while not speaking directly about the mingled spirit, attempts to distance his explication of Galatians 2:20 from possible Eutychian association:

“Not I; it is Christ that lives in me” (Gal. 2:20). Christ is our life (Col. 3:4). These magnificent phrases imply a transmission of Christ’s life and do not in any way suggest a kind of pantheistical fading away of our personalities. St. Paul points out, too, that we do not cease to live according to the flesh when we live according to the faith in the Son of God (ibid.). The distinction is, then, clearly sustained, but, the point having been made, the apostle is free to affirm that Christ identifies with himself the new creature, the new “I” resulting from faith and baptism. He superimposes, as it were, his own personality on ours but, far from annihilating us, removes only our imperfections and afflictions. We are mysteriously taken up in the glorified Christ in an intimate community of being and of life. (144-145)

In addition to the danger of being associated with the Eutychian heresy, another potential theological pitfall looms for those who are willing to consider and receive the word concerning our being joined to the Lord as one spirit. This pitfall relates to whether or not there are limitations on the believers’ organic identification with the Triune God, especially as it relates to His attributes, His Godhead, and His ultimate position as the sole object of our worship. The possibility



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**Paul received the word of God through the operation of the mingled spirit as he was writing 1 Corinthians in order that the men of God in Corinth would be complete and fully equipped for every good work in relation to the building up of the Body of Christ.**

of mingling forces a theologian to consider the process of deification. This process, understandably, is a source of much consternation, and many find it easier to simply reject rather than to consider the full implications of what it means to be partakers of the divine nature (2 Pet. 1:4). Amiot, quoting Durrwell and commenting on his words, notes,

The reciprocal dwelling of Christ in the Christian and of the Christian in Christ is compared in the gospel to the reciprocal immanence of the Father and the Son: John 14:19-20; 17:21, 23. We readily talk in this connection of identification or of a life of identification in Christ. It is useful to note that the identification is not complete. It does not take place “in the heights of the divinity but in the corporeal humanity in which he went through death and the resurrection and was filled with the treasures of salvation” (Durrwell, 255). This corporeal humanity is identified with the Saviour without equalling him (*ibid.*, 253 and 257). (145)

Wikenhauser, drawing from Clement of Alexandria, refers to 1 Corinthians 6:17, recognizes the theological pitfalls, and then seeks to undercut Paul’s use of the term *spirit* because of the possible implications that he sees related to our being joined to the Lord.

“But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit (with him).” Clement of Alexandria explains correctly that “spirit” here means the spiritual body (σῶμα πνευματικόν), a union of the glorified (spiritual) Lord and his members; this union, which is of a higher degree and more full of grace, is what we call the Mystical Body of Christ. Paul here says that the Christian enters upon an interior fellowship with the Lord. But just as there is no fusion of personality between the first mentioned pair [v. 16], so we have no right to postulate such a fusion between Christ and the Christian. (74)

Out of concerns related to the potential for Eutychian confusion and an incomplete understanding of the nature of our organic relationship with the Triune God—a relationship in which we receive the divine life, partake of the divine nature, and become, as divinized sons of God, God in life and nature but not in the Godhead and not as an object of worship—many Christians believe that

mingling should not be applied to the believers of Christ. This is unnecessarily cautious, for the New Testament speaks of the union of Christ and His believers in terms that certainly express a mingling. The believers are said to be born of God (John 1:13; 1 John 5:1); and just as there is a mingling of two lives in any birth, there is certainly a mingling of the divine life of God and the human life of the believers in those who have been begotten of God. The believers are also said to be the Body of Christ (Rom. 12:5; 1 Cor. 10:17; 12:12-13, 27; Eph. 1:22-23; 5:30; Col. 1:24) with Christ as the Head (Eph. 1:22; 4:15; 5:23; Col. 1:18), and in this Body, Christ is inseparably mingled with His believers. (Robichaux 62)

<sup>3</sup>According to 2 Timothy 3:16-17, “All Scripture is God-breathed and profitable for teaching, for conviction, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, fully equipped for every good work.” These verses speak of some of the defining characteristics of the Word of God. First, as the breath of God, its very essence is spirit (John 6:63). Second, the breathed-out word teaches, convicts, corrects, and instructs in righteousness. Paul received the word of God through the operation of the mingled spirit as he was writing these two passages in 1 Corinthians in the form of both conviction and correction, and he produced both teaching and instruction in righteousness. He received the God-breathed word and produced the Word of God in order that the men of God in Corinth would be complete and fully equipped for every good work in relation to the building up of the Body of Christ.

<sup>4</sup>Witness Lee defines the subject of 1 Thessalonians as “a holy life for the church life—serving the living God, conducting ourselves in a holy manner and waiting for the Lord’s coming.” Given that Paul wrote this Epistle in Corinth, and that the subject matter largely reflects the situation and need of the saints in Corinth, as later revealed in the two Epistles that bear their name, Paul’s subsequent development of the truth of the operation of the mingled spirit on the three parts of man, which is only briefly alluded to in 1 Thessalonians 5:23, is significant.

<sup>5</sup>By failing to account for the uniqueness and truth of Paul’s utterance in regard to the

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tripartite nature of man, the Catholic Church deprives its followers of access to the spiritual realities that are available through the experience and enjoyment of the mingled spirit, which is the vital means of our organic union with Christ and our fellow members of the Body of Christ. As a consequence, many of the mystical realities of our participation in the fellowship of the Son have been reduced to outward practices and rituals in the Catholic Church, especially in relation to the Eucharist. Amiot even titles one of his sections with the heading “Union with the Body of Christ through the Eucharist” (193). While the Lord’s table signifies and testifies of the reality of our union with Christ, it cannot, simply through its objective and ritualistic observance, substantiate the subjective realities of our union with Christ, which are available only in and through our mingled spirit.

<sup>6</sup>Even though 1 Corinthians 15:45 is unambiguous in its declaration that Christ, as the last Adam, became a life-giving Spirit in resurrection, this verse causes considerable theological consternation because it suggests to many a blurring of the distinction between the Son and the Spirit. What is lost in much of this hand wringing is a realization that Paul is speaking of Christ and the Spirit within a purely economical context. François Amiot notes, “When St. Paul speaks of Christ, he makes little distinction between our Saviour’s successive states and, as it were, says everything at once. In his intuitive approach, he does not indicate explicitly the distinctions that theology had later to make” (111). Paul’s intuitive approach is an economical approach that focuses on the process in time of Christ’s incarnation, human living, crucifixion, and resurrection. Oscar Cullmann in *Christ and Time* says,

Everything that the first Christians proclaim in their writings is revelation of God’s action in Christ, and accordingly constitutes a continuous Christ-process...With every other division [i.e., theological perspective], even the trinitarian, one runs the risk of introducing into the New Testament a later speculative formulation of questions which is foreign to Primitive Christianity; one runs the risk of obliterating or at least weakening Primitive Christianity’s thorough orientation to revelatory and redemptive history. (26)


Neill Q. Hamilton confirms this point in *The Holy Spirit and Eschatology in Paul*. He also stresses the point that Paul’s treatment of the Spirit does not focus on or impinge upon the immutable, ontological distinctions among the three persons in the Divine Trinity.

An attempt to deal with the Spirit in the traditional way as an aspect of the doctrine of the Trinity would be inappropriate to Paul. This is not to deny that the Spirit is for Paul a distinct entity over against the Father and the Son. The problem of the Trinity, which is the occasion of the doctrine of the Trinity, was for Paul no problem. He does not discuss it. To deal with the Spirit in the tradition of the New Testament is to avoid all speculation about the nature of the being of the Spirit. The viewpoint of the New Testament is consistently that of a concern with redemptive history, and this redemptive history is for the first Christians a “Christ-process.” (3)

When speaking of the redemptive process of Christ, including the stage of the process involving resurrection, Amiot notes that Paul “completes his thought by presenting Christ more positively as the source of true life. Handed over to death for our sins, he is raised to life for our justification (Rom. 4:25). He becomes for us in a new way a ‘life-giving spirit’ (1 Cor. 15:45)” (88). It is the how of Amiot’s “new way” that is problematic to some, because it suggests the loss of distinction among the three persons of the Trinity. This concern is often presented in comments related to 2 Corinthians 3:17. In *Pauline Mysticism: Christ in the Mystical Teaching of St. Paul*, Alfred Wikenhauser notes,

It may be urged that Paul says in 2 Cor. 3:17: “The Lord is a Spirit”; but whatever this means, it is not a statement that the Lord and the Spirit are identical, for the next sentence reads: “And where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.” There is here a formal distinction between the Lord and the Spirit which would be impossible if the two were identical...It does not mean that Christ and the Spirit are metaphysically identical. (84)

Concerns about the relationship between Christ and the Spirit at the ontological level and subsequent efforts to weaken even the economical relationship between Christ and the Spirit may



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be influenced by tritheistic views of the Trinity. If one's understanding of the Triune God, however, is rooted in the orthodox view of the Trinity—that there is distinction without separation among the eternally co-existing and coinhering persons of the Trinity—1 Corinthians 15:45 and 2 Corinthians 3:17 should not be viewed as problematic. Rather, they reveal how the economy of the Triune God has been actualized within the believers' experience. Without Christ becoming the life-giving Spirit, there is no possibility of fellowship in spirit or union with the Triune God in the mingled spirit.

<sup>7</sup>When Paul speaks of having the mind of Christ, he is not speaking metaphorically; neither is he confused in his choice of words, as Wikenhauser suggests:

Speaking of himself Paul says in 1 Cor. 2:16: "We have the νοῦς of Christ". The word νοῦς literally means "mind", but it obviously means "Spirit" here. He uses νοῦς here instead of πνεῦμα, the usual word for Spirit, because the word νοῦς occurs in the Isaias passage which he had cited as a proof immediately before: "Who hath known the mind (νοῦς) of the Lord, that he may instruct him?" (65-66)

<sup>8</sup>This explains, in part, the intensely personal nature of his admonitions in these chapters as well as the number of personal references to himself (12:1-3; 13:1-3, 11-12; 14:5-6, 14-15, 18-19, 37).

<sup>9</sup>William Barclay draws this same distinction when he comments on the meaning of prophesying. I especially appreciate his point that forthtelling or telling forth comes from a person who knows the mind, heart, and will of God.

Paul goes on to mention *prophecy*. It would give a better idea of the meaning of this word if we translated it *preaching*. We have too much associated *prophecy* with the foretelling of what was to happen. But at all times *prophecy* has been far more *forthtelling* than *foretelling*. The prophet is a man who lives so close to God that he knows his mind and heart and will, and so can make them known to men. Because of that his function is twofold. (a) He brings rebuke and warning, telling men that their way of action is not in accordance with the will of God. (b) He brings advice and guidance, seeking to direct men into the ways God wishes them to go. (111)

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